

Is the CIA Still Conducting Medical Experiments on Unsuspecting Americans?

The spectre of continuing CIA medical experiments on humans, similar to those conducted on unsuspecting American citizens in the 1950's and 1960's, was raised recently with the inclusion of a CIA advisor in a bill authored by Senator Edward Kennedy, establishing a permanent commission charged with studying issues related to the ethics of medical research.

"It boggles the mind to try and comprehend what value a CIA advisor could be to a commission charged with the furthering of moral and ethical principles in the use of humans in medical research," stated Carleen Bridgeman, a registered nurse and executive director of the Institute for the Study of Medical Ethics, a California patient's rights group.

"This is the agency which dispensed LSD to persons without their knowledge, conducted drug experiments on prisoners disguised as legitimate medical research, tested 'knock-out' drugs on advanced cancer patients, and had as one of its purposes, to 'perfect the use of drugs for brainwashing citizens, students, prisoners, and subjects at random and to do it surreptitiously,'" continued Ms. Bridgeman. "We can only conclude that such an advisor is included on this committee because such medical experimentation is continuing and the CIA advisor's job is to instruct the committee what not to investigate."

Bridgeman was not the only one to come to such a conclusion. Roy Branson, a senior research scholar at the



SEN. EDWARD KENNEDY (D-MASS.)

Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics, in a letter concerning Kennedy's bill (S. 2579), stated, "I am intrigued that your subcommittee assumes that the CIA will continue to conduct experiments on humans, making it necessary for them to have a non-voting, ex officio advisor to the commission included in Sec. 1081(d)."

Much of the information on the CIA's role in medical research was obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and from testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee in 1975. It was revealed that between 1950 and 1971, acting under the auspices of more than 50 universities, hospitals and medical clinics, as well as the US Army, the CIA conducted brainwashing and experimentation with LSD and other illegal drugs on untold numbers of unsuspecting human subjects. In most cases the

subjects were students, patients, soldiers, and people from all walks of life, who were totally unaware that dangerous and possibly fatal experiments were being conducted upon them.

In 1975 the Senate Intelligence Committee uncovered at least partial data on some of the experiments conducted by and for the CIA. The purpose of some of the experiments:

- To perfect the use of drugs for brainwashing citizens, students, prisoners and subjects at random and to do it surreptitiously.
- To combine LSD with alcohol to find the reactions of given subjects.
- To combine LSD with planted electrodes to locate the centers of pain in the brain.
- To figure out ways to deliver chemicals into sprays, food, drinks, and aerosol cans that will either kill or alter behavior.
- To get control of an individual to the point where he will do our bidding against his will, even against such fundamental laws of nature as self-preservation.

Such experiments were carried out on numerous persons who had no idea they were being experimented on. At least 7,000 persons were so treated by the Army alone. It was found that one Army biochemist, Dr. Frank Olson, jumped to his death from a 10th story window in New York City after LSD was slipped into his drink by a CIA agent.

Most of the experiments were conducted by the CIA and Department of Defense

will probably never be known," said Bridgeman, "because in 1973 the research and methods under which it was carried out was recognized to be so potentially embarrassing that the then head of the CIA, Richard Helms, ordered all the files destroyed. Only a few that were overlooked have given us this insight into the intelligence community's idea of 'medical research.'"

"While the Institute does not necessarily oppose a commission to work toward informed consent and patients' protection as is proposed by Senator Kennedy's bill, we certainly would oppose the inclusion of CIA representatives on such a commission and we do oppose the fact that the committee hearings and meetings will not be open to the public. The American public has a right to know what type of 'experimentation' the CIA and other governmental agencies are conducting, if only out of a sense of self-protection," concluded Ms. Bridgeman. "We've been the victims too many times."

The Institute recently spearheaded a successful drive for a California law which defines the rights of persons used as subjects in medical experiments and establishes penalties for the violation of informed consent in medical experiments. The Institute is currently investigating the use of humans in experimentation not covered by the recently enacted law and intends to work for protection for people in these areas in future legislation.

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